

VZCZCXRO2336

OO RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK  
RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHNEH RUEHNP RUEHPOD RUEHPW  
RUEHROV RUEHRS RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHTA #1210/01 2021027  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 211027Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5834  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 1776  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1845  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1143  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0804  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 1328  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 1240  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2396  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2714

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 ASTANA 001210

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EAP/CM, DRL

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [CH](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: LOCAL UIGHURS CONCERNED ABOUT UNREST IN  
CHINA'S XINJIANG PROVINCE, ORGANIZE LARGE DEMONSTRATION

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Kazakhstani media outlets, think tanks, and interest groups are expressing concern that Uighur-related unrest in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) may negatively affect Kazakhstan because of Kazakhstan's own large Uighur population and close economic relationship with China. Many Kazakhstani businessmen earn their livelihood through trade with the XUAR. Kazakhstani government officials have publicly discussed efforts to provide consular assistance to Kazakhstani citizens in Xinjiang, but have largely eschewed commenting on the political aspects of the unrest. Kazakhstani Uighur groups have criticized the Chinese government and staged a large protest in Almaty. An official from the Chinese Embassy in Astana brought up Xinjiang with PolOffs, arguing that the Chinese government had taken steps to try to maintain ethnic harmony. Kazakhstani Uighur activist Anvar Khadzhiyev told PolOff that Kazakhstani Uighurs should de-emphasize the situation in Xinjiang to avoid creating trouble in Kazakhstan, but he also criticized China's policies. END SUMMARY.

KAZAKHSTANI EXPERTS WORRY UNREST IN XINJIANG WILL DISRUPT TRADE

¶3. (SBU) Kazakhstan-China bilateral trade reached \$12 billion in 2008, making China one of Kazakhstan's largest trading partners. China is also one of the largest sources of foreign investment for Kazakhstan, with Chinese companies investing \$692 million in 2008. Bulat Sultanov, Director of the Kazakh Institute of Strategic Studies, a government-sponsored think tank, told the press on July 8 that "massive disorders in Urumqi (i.e. the capital of XUAR) may have negative consequences for Kazakhstan, since the XUAR accounts for 70 percent of trade between Kazakhstan and China." Sultanov said order should be restored in the shortest time possible in accordance with the law, while not depriving citizens of their rights to carry out peaceful demonstrations in the future.

KAZAKHSTANI OFFICIALS FOCUS COMMENTS ON CONSULAR ASSISTANCE

¶4. (SBU) On July 7, Kazakhstani television and print media reported that many Kazakhstani citizens were trapped in Xinjiang as a result of the unrest, and MFA spokesperson Yerzhan Ashikbayev asked

Kazakhstani citizens to postpone any travel to that region. On July 8, MFA press service head Ilyas Omarov said that the Kazakhstani government was organizing an evacuation of Kazakhstani citizens from Xinjiang by bus. Ashikbayev reported that over 1,000 Kazakhstani citizens -- of an estimated 5,000 who were in Xinjiang at the time unrest began -- had left Xinjiang over the past several days. Kazakhstan's Ambassador to China, Ikram Adyrbekov, thanked the Chinese government for their assistance in evacuating Kazakhstani citizens, and said he was "worried and heart-struck" about the unrest, but stressed that it was "purely a matter of China's domestic politics." It appears that the government has refrained from making any other political commentary about the unrest.

#### UNION OF UIGHUR YOUTH ORGANIZES MOURNING CEREMONY

15. (U) In reaction to recent events in China, Kazakhstani Uighur groups have criticized the Chinese government and staged protests in Almaty. (NOTE: Many Kazakhstani Uighurs emigrated from Xinjiang or are the descendants of immigrants. Kazakhstani Uighur activist Kakharman Kozhamberdiyev told the press that an estimated 70,000-120,000 Uighurs entered the Soviet Union from China in the early 1960's. END NOTE.) The opposition news website Respublika reported that the Kazakhstani Uighur diaspora declared 40 days of mourning for the slain Uighurs in China. According to opposition news website Azattyq, the Union of Uighur Youth of Kazakhstan also organized a government-sanctioned mourning ceremony held in the suburbs of Almaty on July 10. Uighur representatives from the Kazakhstan Assembly of Peoples did not attend, and political leaders were not invited. Following the mourning ceremony, however, the representative of the Union of Uighur Youth Abrashid Turdiyev expressed to reporters his criticism of Chinese authorities for their slow response to the recent inter-ethnic conflict between

ASTANA 00001210 002 OF 004

Uighurs and Hans that took place in a factory in Guangdong. Turdiyev said Uighurs in Urumqi rose up to demand that Chinese authorities conduct an objective investigation into the incident, and criticized the Chinese government's handling of the unrest in Urumqi. Turdiyev told reporters Kazakhstani Uighurs are appealing to the media, the world community, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to express their unbiased opinion of Chinese government actions. Abdulla Usherov, a representative of the Almaty City Uighur Cultural Center and several local residents also denounced China's actions and called for an objective investigation into events in Urumqi.

#### KAZAKHSTANI UIGHUR GROUPS CRITICIZE CHINA FOR SLOW RESPONSE

16. (U) During a roundtable event held in Almaty following the mourning ceremony, Kakharman Kozhamberdiyev, Deputy Head of the World Congress of Uighurs and an activist from the Uighur Association of Kazakhstan, along with other leaders of the Uighur diaspora in Kazakhstan, reportedly condemned the actions of the Chinese authorities. Kazakhstani Sinologist Murat Auezov told the media that China has a very large military contingent in Xinjiang and it could have stopped the unrest within two to three hours, "but there is the feeling that they were waiting for a worsening situation." Auezov also said, "I'm afraid that China was waiting for an escalation of the tragedy in order to undertake 'adequate' actions." On July 10, Kozhamberdiyev told the media that events in Xinjiang "were the result of the totalitarian regime in China and simply continue the long-lasting rights infringements against the Uighur people." Kozhamberdiyev added that the WCU's ultimate goal is to separate Xinjiang from China and found a sovereign state, and asked, "how can a region, with more than nine million Uighurs and abundant natural resources and close ties with Central Asian culture, not pursue independence and establish its own country?" He denied that the World Congress of Uighurs (WCU) was related to the violence in Xinjiang, stating, "The goal of our Congress is to achieve the rights of Uighurs to self-determination in a peaceful way. According to one of the articles (of its charter), the WCU is against terrorism."

#### KAZAKHSTANI EXPERTS CONCERNED ABOUT SEPARATISM IN XUAR

17. (U) Kazakhstani political analyst Dosym Satpayev was quoted in

the media on July 8 saying that Beijing's investment in Xinjiang over the past few years has triggered Han migration and a resulting ethnic imbalance, which he predicted will have two consequences for Kazakhstan -- an increase in separatist activities and a population migration from China to Central Asia. Konstantin Syroezhkin, chief researcher at the government-affiliated Kazakh Institute for Strategic Studies, echoed Satpayev's concerns about separatism. Syroezhkin stated to the press that the unrest in XUAR might have been organized from abroad using tools such as the Internet. He encouraged the Uighurs to drop their separatist aspirations, arguing that China's Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy stipulates that ethnic groups practice self-government in their regions."

#### CHINESE EMBASSY SAYS STABILITY IN XINJIANG CRITICAL TO ECONOMY

18. (SBU) Chinese Embassy Second Secretary Zhang Zhengkun raised the Xinjiang issue with PolOffs during a representational event on July 15, saying that "Chinese officials had taken all possible steps to maintain ethnic harmony" since stability is a very important factor for China to ensure continued economic growth -- which in turn is necessary to prevent a wide range of problems. Zhang also acknowledged Kazakhstan plays a critical role in guaranteeing the energy supplies necessary for China's continued economic development.

#### MODERATE ACTIVIST PRAISES UIGHUR SITUATION IN KAZAKHSTAN...

19. (SBU) On July 16, PolOff met with Anvar Khadzhiyev, a member of the Executive Board of Kazakhstan's Republican Uighur Cultural Center and a member of Kazakhstan's Assembly of Peoples -- an

ASTANA 00001210 003 OF 004

organization chaired by President Nazarbayev which represents the interests of Kazakhstan's minority ethnic groups. Khadzhiyev, a professor of law at Eurasia University and moderate Uighur activist, was born in Xinjiang -- where his father died in prison after 18 years of confinement -- and moved with his mother to Kazakhstan during the Soviet era. He praised the government of Kazakhstan for its support in preserving Uighur culture, and argued that government support for a multicultural society and education in the Uighur language are two of the most important reasons for the positive situation of Uighurs in Kazakhstan. Khadzhiyev also pointed out that in Kazakhstan, there are ethnic Uighurs who hold high-level positions in government and law enforcement. (NOTE: Prime Minister Masimov is an ethnic Uighur. END NOTE.)

#### ...AND CONTRASTS IT WITH THE SITUATION IN CHINA

110. (SBU) According to Khadzhiyev, the reaction of Xinjiang Uighurs to Chinese policies of the last few years "is natural for people who have been oppressed." The Urumqi riots are "the income of despair," Khadzhiyev told PolOff, remarking that "such problems will probably continue until issues of human rights and ethnic conflicts are addressed fairly." Khadzhiyev said that, "like other empires, the current Chinese government is imposing its will on the Uighurs, trying to control them with education and propaganda." He said that since 2003, the Chinese government has been transforming Uighur schools into Chinese schools; in recent years, only the lower grades of elementary school offer education in the Uighur language. Khadzhiyev also stated that the Chinese government is actively spreading the message that Uighur children should be educated in Chinese in order to have a good future.

111. (SBU) Khadzhiyev claimed that Chinese policy goes beyond that of other "empires" in its attempt to "totally eliminate the Uighur ethnicity" by bringing in large numbers of Han Chinese to settle Xinjiang, putting Xinjiang's assets under Han Chinese control through the Develop the West program, allocating positions in Xinjiang in all economic spheres to Han Chinese, forcing Uighurs to leave Xinjiang to work, and unjustly imprisoning and killing Uighurs on charges of extremism and separatism. Khadzhiyev said he has relatives in Xinjiang, but he does not dare to contact them, for fear that they would lose their jobs or suffer harassment from the authorities. Khadzhiyev told PolOff that although the Chinese government labels Uighurs terrorists and separatists, it would be more appropriate to call the Chinese government's actions "state

terrorism." Khadzhiyev did not directly call for an independent Xinjiang, but argued that Chinese Uighurs should at least have real self-government. "The Chinese say that the WCU is a terrorist organization," Khadzhiyev remarked with a shrewd smile, "but I do not think the U.S. government would allow any terrorist organization to operate in Washington."

¶12. (SBU) Khadzhiyev continued, "As a Kazakhstani citizen and representative of the Uighur community, it is my personal opinion that Kazakhstani Uighurs should not emphasize the situation in Xinjiang, otherwise it will result in trouble for Kazakhstan and for our Uighur community here." Khadzhiyev hinted that Chinese authorities may attempt to stoke ethnic divisions, saying "In Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs and Uighurs are very close friends. But even in Kazakhstan there have been conflicts when the authorities had to interfere. The unrest in Xinjiang worries Kazakhstani authorities and does not reflect well on the Kazakhstani Uighur community." Khadzhiyev also maintained that Chinese special services are seeking to create provocations and entrap Uighur community leaders in Kazakhstan. Although he had been invited to China several times, Khadzhiyev told PolOff he had declined the invitations "because it is too dangerous." (NOTE: On July 17, the day following his meeting with PolOff, Khadzhiyev died at a public swimming pool in Astana, apparently of a heart attack. While some Uighur activists expressed suspicions about his sudden death, at this juncture, we have no information that would indicate it resulted from foul play. END NOTE.)

ASTANA 00001210 004 OF 004

#### KAZAKHSTANI UIGHURS ORGANIZE LARGE PROTEST

¶13. (U) According to press reports, approximately 8,000 Kazakhstani Uighurs attended a July 19 demonstration in Almaty in support of their ethnic brethren in China. The event was approved by local authorities, who moved it to an indoor venue, reportedly in order to provide better security -- although the venue was too small by half to accommodate the large crowd. At the demonstration, the head of Kazakhstan's Uighur Cultural Center, Akhmetzhan Shardinov, demanded that the Chinese government carry out an unbiased investigation into the events in Urumqi. The WCU's Kozhamberdiyev spoke, saying "We have come out to protest today because the Chinese authorities are continuing to deprive people of their human rights." Speaking in Uighur, Union of Uighur Youth activist Abrashid Turdiyev concluded his speech with the slogan "Freedom for Uighurstan," prompting the packed hall to rise to their feet shouting and pumping their fists. Other rally participants called on the Chinese government not to use terms such as Uighur terrorism or extremism, and singer Gulmira Razieva demanded that China "observe international human rights and rigorously follow international conventions, including the convention against torture and cruel treatment of demonstrators." Websites reported on the peaceful event, which lasted an hour and a half, showing photos of the large crowd with participants waving the flag of "East Turkestan," chanting slogans condemning the Chinese authorities for violence against the Uighurs, and calling on the United Nations to conduct an independent investigation of the "Urumqi tragedy."

¶14. (SBU) COMMENT: That Kazakhstani Uighurs have become so exercised about the unrest in Xinjiang reflects the fact that many are from families who immigrated from Xinjiang and many still have relatives there. While the government does not want Kazakhstan's close relationship with China disrupted by the unrest in Xinjiang, the authorities have apparently decided to provide a modicum of political space for Kazakhstani Uighurs to vent their concerns about the situation. We understand that the government warned participants in the Almaty demonstration not to be openly critical of China -- a warning which went partially unheeded. The event was Almaty's largest political demonstration in a number of years -- at least several times larger than anything organized by opposition parties or civil society groups. This indicates that under the right (or wrong) circumstances, ethnic identity has the potential to be an important factor in political mobilization, which is why the Kazakhstani government focuses so much attention on maintaining the country's inter-ethnic harmony. END COMMENT.

